

# ON THE BORDERLINES OF SEMIOTICS (OBJECTIVITY VS. SUBJECTIVITY)

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## Abstract

The present text tries to elaborate some of the theoretical principles which potentially lead towards defining semiotic approaches. My aim is to establish as much as possible clear-cut limits to semiotic theory. Starting from the communicational processes, my aim is to explain encoding external reality into a new one in the case of the linguistic field, as well as to overcome semiotics' exactness (in the field of arts). The questions to which I try to answer are for instance Saussurian dichotomy (its objectivity and subjectivity nature), and its practical implications to semiotics. I shall as well try to use an example through a semiotics of passions, (through the example of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, and Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet) as a tool to contributing to the signification process.

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**Keywords:** Semiotics, objectivity, subjectivity, passions, signification

## Introduction

It is a firmly established fact that semiotics in general cannot regard one field as an object of its analysis only, but it is normally concerned with more than one of them. There is no doubt in saying that one can talk today of semiotics of communication, semiotics of media, semiotics of arts, of language, textual semiotics, etc. Some scholars, however, have defined their approach to be a specific one: as, for instance, linguistic (or: a language-based approach), psychological, representational, epistemological, existential etc. A common question can be raised, which has also been raised earlier (Eco, 1975): where do the borderlines of semiotics lie? Do they overcome its exactness? What is it that links all semiotically treatable disciplines together, so as to create a general theory of semiotics?

It is, however, a generally known fact that the study of signs is the object of semiotics. Such a thesis would lead us to the process of determining the tiniest units of a possible analysis. The purely semiotic way of resolving a multi-disciplinary object of study is seeing through ways of its

possibilities, i.e. ways of fragmenting the object into its constituent parts. If such possibilities are taken to be an indispensable fact of viewing results of a semiotic analysis, then the question of the precision of such a science or a method shall be the object of our discussion. As, for instance, the question: is semiotics a psychological way of seeing dichotomies (presented to us as an object of analysis) (Saussure, 2011), or a way of seeing not only dichotomies, but more than two distinguishable elements, out of which a meaning has to be inferred? (Peirce, 1960) Is it otherwise a discipline or a science that would link the mentioned two points in a form of trajectory of sememas seen as a result of functions such as contradictoriness, disjunction, and conjunction? (A. J. Greimas, 1987) And last but not least, is semiotics a science which, through its modality notion, and ready-given narrative grammar, can be rendered passionate to the extent that even the tiniest taxonomic notions are relationally analyzed on epistemological grounds? (A. J. Greimas & Fontanille, 1993) Moreover, is semiotics a science which should primarily concentrate on human existence as described by a variety of social contexts (be they universal or specific), to the extent of determining *pre-existential signs* thus introducing the *existential philosophy* as *modus vivendi* towards a goal of defining a semantic micro-universe? (Tarasti, 2000)

Needless to say, such scientific questions would lead us towards deciding whether one treats the object or the subject in terms of a semiotic analysis, or both. If for instance, one takes a novel's character as an example and tries to compare his/her behavior to what one might have realistically done, to what an extent would we encode the realistic reality to the fictive one? One has to conclude that semiotics is also obliged to consider the fictive reality, (Eco, 1994a) which comprises the aesthetic message alongside other messages which might be a part of one's object of study. The question of the extent of such fictive elements embedded into reality (found in the non-fictive world), is a matter that does not concern semiotics only. It may as well be a part of an interpretation theory, which overcomes the limits of semiotics.

Theoretically speaking, one would speak of a communicational process as such: it is a precise process which determines the amount of transmitted elements, pieces of objects which would otherwise be able to find themselves on the other side of the communication channel. Another question can be posed here as well: is it that one can merge the semiotic and communicational processes? Which one is able *to comprise a space for processing raw material*? One of our main theses should lie here: in establishing what is an object and what is a subject, in a semiotic comprehension. How much do semiotic processes allow an automatizing of

repetitions, which would result in an accomplished communicational process?

The redundant features should be eliminated by way of selecting them through procedures representing an act of processing signs. One can have such a situation for instance, in the frames of the *over-coded* elements or concepts taken as an example, such as may be the case in the field of arts. Is it not then semiotics that unites both aspects (if such elements are seen as objects or as subjects)? In conclusion, in my view, semiotics should contribute to the complementariness of the elements involved in the mentioned processes. Which elements though, should be complementary to one another? Should such elements be a part of a general theory of semiotics, or should they overcome its limits?

In order to answer such and similar questions, issues should be treated one by one. Otherwise, treating them simultaneously would lead us towards a generalizing hypothesis, which, as is generally known, may have considerable risks in terms of their final comprising into a single theory of signs.

### **The Communicational Processes**

Considering the fact that the sign should be a subject to a semiotic analysis, and that it should be further elaborated to the extent of its various functions and types, ( such as in the case of its motivation(Saussure, 2011)) ,it can be stated that the signs communicate among each other,by way of their sharing, adding, or deletion of their constituent parts, which have in all aspects to contribute to the process of signification. No matter what field might be an object of analysis(either treated as a part of the rigorous sciences or humanities), the semiotic processes have to be performed with the aim of defining a semantic field. In other words, semiotics gets complex in its nature at the very beginning of its analytical approach. Questions of the following kind may, however, arise: why should such processes end up in meaningful units, thus producing semanticity? Semiotically speaking, the elements taken into consideration can correlate among each other thus rendering a wholeness, which would further be taken as a hypothesis. Philosophically speaking, no such elements can, however, be meaningless, although they may have been subject to a conversion process (supposing that some of its elements do not hold a semantic validity). Taking the aforementioned facts into our mind, we can conclude that a process of information movement has to come into existence, so that one could make it communicable. Such an interaction mechanism can be allowed only through the *signs communicating, which aim at shaping meaning out of a given form.*

Many scholars have spoken of information as a semiotic entity. For a semiotician, a piece of information has to be in permanent movement, so that

it could be subordinated to the processes of its transformation into a shape of an understandable and readable concept sent through the addressee to its destination. Establishing thus a communicational and/or an informational process (Shannon & Weaver, 1948), one can speak of the communicational process already performed (or, seen in another context, an interactional process accomplished). As can be seen, semiotics cannot do without its *processes, on-going processes which have otherwise been named communicational*. It is thus said, therefore, that the core of semiotics is the theory of signs, the interaction itself with the information in the shape of signs so as to create messages, as a raw material which needs to be encoded.

A logical question then follows: is it the subject or the object that is being analyzed by semiotic methods? We would offer more than one answer to this question. Scientifically speaking, semiotics may comprise both, depending on the approach. Within the frame of the communicational processes,<sup>36</sup> for instance, one should treat the object. It is perfectly clear that the signals which are transmitted through the communication channel should reach the other side (or the destination), in an equal proportion. Shannon and Weaver (1948) have discussed the analogous impulses of a telephone communication. Or, as Griffin says:

*The idea of communication as information processing was firmly established by Claude Shannon, a Bell Telephone Company research assistant who developed a mathematical theory of signal transmission. His goal was to get the maximum line capacity with minimum distortion. Shannon showed little interest in meaning of message or its effect to the listener. His theory merely aimed at solving the technical problems of high fidelity transfer of sound. (Griffin, 2003: 23)*

As can be seen, still at the level of signals<sup>37</sup>, Shannon has set a model on the inter-communication of signals' transmission. What happens though, if one has to cope with a subject instead of an object? Is such communication comprised within such a method as well? Or better: how does semiotics behave within inter-human communication?

## **The Linguistic Approach**

Besides treating objects from external reality, needed as tools for inter-human communication, it is obvious that subjects also have to communicate. As a consequence, one would conclude that it is evident that semiotics expands its competencies in this field as well. A logical question

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<sup>36</sup>As far as the terms *communicational and/or informational processes* are concerned, it is stated that *there is not any significant difference among them*. [Paraphrasing and italics, mine]. (Eco, 1979).

<sup>37</sup>I am paraphrasing Eco here.

may then follow: how does semiotics interfere? What kind of signs do we use as humans for such an interactional process? And, moreover, are such signs motivated, in the semiotic sense of the word?

My aim in this paper is to set, as much as it is possible, a clear-cut limit on the possibilities of the semiotic approach. Such a task in turn, is imposed by the latest developments in the technological field as well, which make *the philosophical game between subjects and objects even more dangerous*.

One has to conclude however that, even within the social sphere, the communicational process is more than evident. We have to approach “truths” of various kinds, which sometimes do not necessarily prove to be scientific. This in turn opens doors to the semiotic approach, which would consequently pose the following question: what is the objectivity and subjectivity of it? When and why does it overcome objective reality, thus helping us to create a brand new reality?

No doubt, language use and its application is a proof of that. Besides the aforementioned questions which, as we have said, expand our approach to more than one scientific sphere, our task here is to explicate the relationship between semiotics and language study. A firmly established fact however is, as is generally known, that we cannot communicate without language usage, in case one disregards non-verbal communication, in the context of the language use per se. Its usage into practice, its application in turn, is an object of applied linguistics. As, for instance, what is the form of words? What is their behavior in various circumstances? Seen through the eyes of a semiotician, it is a permanent communicational process. One can conclude this discourse with Saussurian words: *language is only one of the semiotic systems*. (Saussure, 2011)[Paraphrasing and italics, mine] If such a statement is true, then why shouldn't linguistics be a part of semiotics?

We shall quote here Saussure's definition in order to prove what we have previously stated:

*Language is a system of signs which expresses ideas; that is why it is comparable to writing, the deaf and mute people alphabet, the symbolic principles, to the military signs, etc. ...language is only one important system in the frames of such systems. According to this, we can create a science which would be concerned with the life of signs in the frames of societal life: such a science would be a part of social psychology, and as a consequence, of general psychology. We shall call such science semiotics, a word of a Greek origin semeion, - meaning a sign. (Saussure, 1977: 53-4)[Translation and italics, mine].*

As can be seen, here linguistics is *embedded* within semiotics. Returning back to our main thesis, we can conclude that semiotics is

expanding its scientific competencies. According to Saussure therefore, linguistics, or its application in practice (its usage), is simply a part of semiotics. As a consequence, a logical question may be advanced: what is it that semiotics can comprise besides language science? We can immediately respond to this question: the non-verbal signs. This field has been analyzed and quoted frequently by various scholars. It is, as is generally known, primarily based on psychology. [ See: (Landi-Rossi, 2007)] After all, Saussure's observation in relation to the language component of semiotics proves the above-mentioned argument.

### **The Structural and Functional Approach**

Rendering the language functions, and basing them on the recognition of distinctive features, was one of the basic principles of the structural approach. Saussure, however, was one of the scholars who anticipated this later development in general linguistics. Here is what Ivić says in relation to the structural approach:

*Structuralism in the frames of linguistics as well, is manifested in requesting invariants, by way of distinguishing the relevant (important) from the unimportant (the redundant). (Ivić 1970, 100)[The translation is mine]*

As we can see, the concept of dichotomy or binary opposition is introduced by the structural approach, or better (even earlier), by the Russian formalists.(Beker, 1986)<sup>38</sup>

Why do we mention this element now? Firstly, owing to the fact that Saussure belonged to that period of linguistic history. Secondly, with the introduction of binary oppositions as such, Saussure, (but, many other scholars as well), have been able to treat the inter-relation within linguistic signs, which is directly linked to the semiotic method. Differing from other scholars, however, Saussure developed the dichotomy in the sense of his next thesis: the distinction between *language* and *speech*.<sup>39</sup> This dichotomy, known as one of the Saussurian hypotheses, has provoked discussions among semioticians with respect to the entities correlating among each other. While the first concept concerns the abstract level, the second, concerns the concrete one. This contradictoriness as a relation at the very start, tells us about a correlation, a fact that implies a semiotic process. If the first one represents objectivity, the second one represents subjectivity. Semiotically

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<sup>38</sup>The dichotomy in question was initially applied in poetry by the Russian formalists. (See: quoted work, above).

<sup>39</sup>It should be understandable however that such an entity was not a Saussurian invention. As is generally known, many scholars have used such a distinction. Saussure's merit instead lies in the facts that he further elaborates other terms as well, which have later represented essentials of semiotics (either seen from the psychological or linguistic point of view).

speaking though, they have to be complementary to each other. Or better: one without another simply cannot do. The perception, cognition, and thinking processes, occurring in the frames of the human brain (in terms of giving orders, neurological impulses, to the extent of receiving feedback, information), according to Saussure at least, make the first term *language* an abstract notion. The explanation, though, is as follows: one has to be competent in choosing words (capable of using a given language), because building a dictionary and a lexical system *is a matter of convention*. In what a sense then, does this concept represent objectivity? Simply, because of the fact that the language system is given as such. It is a standardized *social phenomenon*. Language is a brand *new reality*, taken from the external one. One more explanation is needed here: language as a system has to create such a new objective reality, as it does not depend only on its norms. *The semantic field it must possess, by way of determined procedures, depends on extra-linguistic issues as well.*

*Speech* on the other hand, as we have seen, is a concrete phenomenon, which depends on our psycho-physic capabilities.<sup>40</sup> Saussure explains this further in terms of our acoustic organs, responsible for pronunciation. Leaving linguistics aside however, this can be explained as *subjectivity*, as it depends on us (as for instance, what sort of a phonetic alphabet shall be applicable).

The question that arises now is the following: what is the importance of semiotics here? It is, exactly in the inter-dependency of this kind of a phenomenon, which has to correlate within. In a semiotic sense however, the speech issue relates (or better: signifies, - using semiotic terms), subjectivity.

It is a firmly established fact that Jakobson has given an enormous contribution not only to general linguistics, but as well to the communicational and/or informational processes. Jakobson has found the linkage between the two: *linguistics and semiotics*, making them result in a communicational process, for the sake of deriving the meaning of the words. Why is Jakobson important here at all? Because of the following: the semiotic process intended in a linguistic context has to undergo determined changes, or rather transformations, out of which a twofold result would emerge: *one of the form (regarding objectivity of such circumstances), and the next of the content (regarding subjectivity of such circumstances).* Another reason to mention Jakobson here is, as we have stated earlier: for the scientific domain of semiotics, the main hypothesis of this paper, which still has to be answered: where do the borderlines of semiotics lie?

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<sup>40</sup>The paraphrasing is mine. ( See: (Saussure, 2011).

Jakobson as a matter of fact proved to be a communication expert through the poetic functions (Innis, 1985), who besides the known *code functions* (See: (Eco 1975)), added new elements to the communicational model which was later adopted by other scholars.<sup>41</sup> Being a linguist, though, his scientific field was thus enlarged, comprising both the theory of codes and the theory of signs. It should be understandable however that our aim here is not a detailed elaboration of his poetic functions (which, as is generally known, are applicable not only to the definition of the grammatical and lexical contents, but as well in the frames of metaphorical language usage and its aesthetic possibilities), as our interest is instead to determine the objectivity and subjectivity of such an approach.

If Jakobson's model is taken into account, we clearly speak of the communicational processes. The addition of the three new elements to such a model is, among other issues, a proof of a semiotic approach in it. The sign as an object of analysis has to pass through such and similar processes, so as to get decently encoded and decoded through the addressee to the destination. How do then the poetic functions behave in our context? It should be clear now that they represent subjectivity, especially in the frames of the aesthetic function. We can conclude therefore that in Jakobson's context, both objectivity and subjectivity, within a semiotic method, have been used.

### **The Field of Arts**

Whether semiotics is applicable in the field of arts in general or not, is still a matter of open discussion. However, one issue is more than evident: if the traditional definition that arts represent *a subjective picturing (shaping) of objective reality* is taken to be true, semiotics has a lot to say. Whether I wish to change the shape of an object (taken from external reality) or not, on the one hand, is up to me—if I wish to create an artistic work. On the other hand, *it is a matter of interpretation whether such an aesthetic work can obtain feed-back information from the reader, audience, and viewer*. To create art one needs to encode, to render the treated material more complex, so that it should finally get decoded by receivers of such complex messages. We see the implication of semiotics exactly in this issue: such as, for instance, within metaphoric references, inserting an embedded text into the main text, a detail into a photograph, an unwritten *ritardando* into a musical score, - all of this is what can actually be done through messages, aiming thus to render the work aesthetic.

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<sup>41</sup>The communicational model explaining the message's process (through encoding and decoding), has been widely used alongside with Jakobson's application models. For instance, as Eco explains, its elements and components can reach their aesthetical component separately, by way of gradual procedures. (See: (Eco, 1968)).



As far as the exactness of semiotics (in terms of the communicational processes) goes, it is to state that each kind of art is expressed through the inter-relation of elements within the *new reality* the artist wishes to present. It is, however, a matter open to discussion as to whether such a newly created work should have an aesthetic value or not.

Language usage, as we have earlier stated, has enabled humanity to present and/or express written material. A part of such material is produced with the *intention of rendering an artistic form*, with the aim of its wide and public presentation.<sup>42</sup>

If one sees literature as *a special manner of writing*, then it is logical to conclude that both form and content ( but not only, as we shall see, in other contexts semiotics can provide for other elements and tools to fulfill its purposes) are the elements deciding its artistic and aesthetic features. Such a distinction, established initially by the Russian Formalists, has been widely elaborated not only for the purpose of distinguishing among various kinds of literary expression, but also, for the purpose of their shaping, formation, and more significantly, has prepared a context for their communicational status. Consequently, it is possible to state that semiotics of literature (and/or semiotics of arts, in general) is the field which is used *as one of the methods to analyze, explicate, elaborate artistic contents of various kinds*. The form (the artistic forms)<sup>43</sup> is what one can objectively (impartially) see. In the field of arts, as should be semiotically understandable, it is not easy to establish a communicational and/or informational process which would result in its precision of the data transmitted. One has nonetheless to take an object (a semiotic object) as a ground, to analyze it (in the sense of rendering it more complex and decomposable into its components and/or units).

Semiotics, for instance, can analyze determined elements within artistic creation.

The category of time, within a work of art, is by all means a semiotic entity, - like I have described it elsewhere; see: (Hoxha, 2013) ,- as not each such element happens within realistic time. Our intention here is not defining such a concept, but seeing it as a tool of *comparison* in relation to different times structured in an artistic context. This, in turn is truly a

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<sup>42</sup>Such an inter-relation, as we shall soon see, is again a part of a semiotic relation. The interaction within a work of art (disregarding its way of creation), - among other semiotically treatable social phenomena, belongs to mass-communication, as an interactional process in a wider sociological sense. ( For such and similar issues, see: (Eco, 1995)).

<sup>43</sup>Each kind of artistic expression is seen and presented in its form. It is useful to say that in some kinds of artistic expression is more visible, presentable (such as the performance arts, visual arts etc), exactly because of their immediate interactional status), and in some other not. It is semiotics itself, like we are trying to explain, that re-organizes such relations, moving itself towards the multifold and complex semantic field.

semiotic entity, because of the fact that the analyzable issues would comprise the following: the relation between fiction and reality, the running of one concept or a better timeline (in a determined work of art) in comparison to another one, etc. Everything that can lead us towards comparing two or more entities (at least seen as dichotomies, but not only), because of its *representational capacities and/or qualities*, is, in conclusion, a subject of *semiotic analysis*.

Besides, the grammatical categories within literature (and/or other kinds of arts as well), may also belong to the semiotic field. Which tense for instance is used to express iteration? Why does the author (and/or the narrator) speak in the third or in the first person singular? The field of narration, as can be seen, is a part of a semiotic analysis. [ See: (Eco, 1994a)]. Objective reality, which is taken to represent one truth in the artistic reality, can suddenly be changed subjectively. The process of *subjectivization* itself, as we shall see in the following pages of this paper, shall represent for us another analytical level (in the frames of semiotics, naturally), based on epistemological grounds, and research methods. In conclusion, such a methodology (A. . J. Greimas & Fontanille, 1993), will further expand the limits of the semiotic possibilities.

Prior to our analysis according to the mentioned methods, let us consider some examples here.

Love and affection for instance, between father and daughter in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, is an objective situation (or: representing objectivity). The narration (in relation to the work's plot) however gets suddenly interrupted by various *content elements* which tell the viewer or listener of the music, what is happening in the meantime. There is an example in Act I. The aria between Rigoletto and his daughter Gilda lasts longer, as the interruption of such content's development has to be foreseen by the composer's *form*. Once one notices this difference, one should be aware of the dichotomy between story and discourse. (Chatman, 1980)<sup>44</sup> Is it not this, in conclusion, a semiotic relation? In relation to this concrete work of art, some other questions may be advanced: is the content or the form more important? Which are these tiny elements that interveneto purposely interrupt such a communicational process? It is at this point that one should talk of semiotic relations, which in the field of the arts can be overcome and be subject to

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<sup>44</sup>This dichotomy, as it is generally known, has been widely used by various scholars, either intended for performing a formal analysis or for comparative matters. Semiotics however, expanding its competencies, is able to see through it various elements separately, which lead towards establishing the mentioned analytical levels. Besides, the narrator(s) problem as well as the narration as a process, as a part of writing techniques (and/ or performing arts' components), like we have said, represent a concrete semiotic phenomenon. ( See for instance: (Eco, 1994c)).

interpretation. Before answering such important questions, (which, as I hope is understandable, are the key concepts of our thesis here), we have to continue discussing the time and narration concepts in the mentioned work. Let us return now to the work we are discussing.

As far as the story (plot) goes, even the reader and/or the listener understand that an information exchange is in progress: Gilda's father is telling to her the story of her mother's death. *All of that is in the grammatical category of the past tense*. One has to understand therefore that this part of the story is already closed. What, though, is happening with the on-going situations? Such events are usually narrated *in the imperfect tense: a fact that tells the reader, the viewer or the listener about the repetitions of the story, for formal reasons*. (Eco 1994a). Here is what Eco has to say, in relation to such an issue:

*The imperfect is very interesting because it is both durative and iterative. As a durative, it tells us that something was happening in the past but does not give us any precise time, and the beginning and the end of the action are unknown. As an iterative it implies that the action has been repeated. But one is never certain when it is iterative, when it is durative, or when it is both. (Eco 1994b, 12)*

Eco, as can be seen, explains the narration process here. An on-going event (or the time flow of the activities therefore), is subjectively retold in an artistic work, usually in an imperfect tense (since realistically it is happening in the story) on the one hand, and only the stories that are *once told (explained)* on the other, are in the past tense (since it is closed, and treats events that realistically have happened), thus representing an objective reality. Returning back to our main thesis, we may advance questions of the following kind: is the artistic expression of an objective or subjective nature? What is an objective reality within the fields of art at all? In my attempt to set relevancies of the semiotic method to issues such as the mentioned ones, I shall try to answer such questions in the following pages of this essay.

### **The Semiotics of Passions as an Example**

It should be clear that semiotic methods, aimed at performing various semiotic processes (as we have stated above), can have a multiple shape (more than one manner of their representation) in their attempt to reach manifestation. Such manifestation can be visible (and/or can be reached) only through ways of exemplification.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Reaching the concrete level though the abstract one after all, is not only a methodological procedure and purpose, but it is instead, a foreseen theoretical process in semiotics, aimed at achieving expected empirical research results.

The universal topics for instance, presented by many authors in the past can be a subject to a semiotic treatment. If one takes for instance Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, one would understand that both love and hatred can be a matter of discussion throughout the analysis of this play. The so-called semiotic topoi introduced in the shape of focal points ( by way of gradualness) (A. J. Greimas, 1987) can lead to a solution of the semantic *enigma* of the play. Formalizing the instances of the characters of the story in the play, in the sense of rendering their narrative structures and units, one would obtain as a result the *readability* of their psychological status and respective correlations. Such correlations can further be subject to processes of transformation which, resulting in determined taxonomies, produce *passionate relations*. This finally proves the of extending semiotics' domain to the semiotics of passions. Thus, one can speak of an epistemologically-based semiotics, which by all means, can treat objects *perceived in a subjective way*. For instance: why should the element of modality be used as rightfully described in Greimas and Fontanille ( 1993), if supposedly one treats the *openness of a work of art*? (Eco, 1989) It by other words means, that one can semiotically interpret creatingthus certain relations, which in their finalization process create semantic results.

A passionate love between the two main characters of the play cannot come true owing to hatred (as a psychological emotion) between two families. Or better: such a love is banned from realization. Such emotions reach their peak even in the context of a breakdown in inter-human communication. Such a situation, clearly enough, leads us to the semiotic relations. This breakdown of communication contains in itself an *enigma*, which definitely belongs to the *real author*. (Eco, 1994a) As a conclusion, such an enigma should be resolved: it has to produce signification, or better: an understanding for the reader and the viewer, so that it can render itself *readably, worth reading*. (Barthes, 1992)

It is here that one needs semiotics. The science of signs, as well as its process: the process of semiosis, should at this point determine the following: why should such hatred between two families interrupt the normal communicational process between the lovers? The answer lies in the following: the objectively found reality of such inter-family relationships gets subjectivized by the following processes, which can be twofold in this respect: the over-codingprocess (i.e. rendering the form with additional meanings besides the principal one), and the *aspectualizing process* (which renders *modalities* such as “*wanting to be*”, “*wishing to love*”, or “*wishing to hate*”), respectively. While the first one belongs to the codes' theory (as we have explained earlier), the second belongs to epistemological grounds, (A. . J. Greimas & Fontanille, 1993) - in the sense of rendering the subject movable towards a state of feelings. Both aspects of a semiotic clue towards

a manifestation of aesthetic values through a semantic universe of the work<sup>46</sup> shall be explained here, as an example of an appropriate methodology.

The objective situation I have been discussing earlier (or the objective semiotic status, in relation to its permanent semiosis), transforms itself into a subjective one or into a subjectivity. The main reason for this is the following: the author adds additional meanings to the primary meaning through motivating signs, thus bringing aesthetic values to his work. The primary, or the initially encoded message, then gets further encoded (or over-coded), in order to reach to its connotations besides its denotations. Let us quote Eco here, in relation to this problem:

*Il messaggio può mettere in gioco vari livelli di realtà: il livello tecnico fisico della sostanza di cui sono fatti i significanti; il livello della natura differenziale dei significanti; il livello dei significati denotati, il livello dei significati connotati; il livello dei sistemi d'attese psicologici, scientifici a cui i segni mi rinviano: e a tutti questi livelli si stabilisce come un sistema di relazioni strutturali omologiche, come se tutti gli livelli fossero definibili, e lo sono, in base a un solo codice generale che tutti li struttura. (Eco, 1968)*

Or in English:

*The message can imply various levels of reality: the technical and physical level of the substance by which the signifiers have been made; the level of the differential nature of the signifiers; the level of the denoted signified issues; the level of the psychological expectation systems; logical or scientific ones to which he signs refer; to these levels however, a system of homologous structural relations is established, as if all systems were definable, and they really are, based on a single general code which structures them all.*<sup>47</sup>

As can be noticed, the message can be coded more than once: it has determined levels of its encoding. The most complex problem of the semiotics of communication (seen in an analogous way in every other chosen semiotic method) is the derivation (and/or deduction) of meaning. If such meaning deriving from a semiotic process is not clear in terms of its manifestation results, then one may overcome the limits of semiotics, being thus a part of theory of interpretation.

In the field of arts, as Eco in the above citation implies himself, we interpret to the extent it is *semiotically possible*. One can assess the

<sup>46</sup>I am paraphrasing Greimas and Fontanille here.

<sup>47</sup>The translation from Italian is mine. I have chosen to quote Eco in original as well, because of the fact that in some editions which are translated into English, some texts are revised, or parts of texts are omitted. I have therefore tried to keep the authenticity of the author's writing.

importance of the domain of semiotics in such a case. Or, speaking concretely: how many more times do we have to encode the message, so as to remain within the borderlines of semiotics? Or on a different level: after one establishes narrative structures and their relational attitudes, how can such messages become moveable in order that they can obtain *semiotic preconditions*, so that their passionate status (and/or configuration) can be seen? Greimas and Fontanille, (1993) have provided for procedures in terms of their transformation, which as a result guarantee a well-determined semantic universe. Besides, a semiotician should be firm in claiming, in this context, that there is more than one answer to the above question.

In the context of our example, for instance, one can pose the following question: why is love between Romeo and Juliet so powerful, and which are the places (or fragments of the work) where Shakespeare presents them? In what way? We have to remind ourselves here, however, that both content and form are decisive in such instances.

The Balcony Scene, for instance, is most famous in that respect. *All Shakespearean words there are in a form of poetry*. This author has chosen rhymed words to express such a love; by which fact they draw the attention of the reader. It is thus again encoded. It is therefore clear that the reader has to understand the metaphor(s) of the words used. The reader has to *decode* the Shakespearean message the way the author intended (wished) it to be. The complex levels of messages (as we have seen in Eco), which move towards their connotations besides their denotations, prove the multiple decomposition of their values. Such values in turn, can be subordinated to transformational processes, thus facilitating their semantic status. In such a view, the semiotics of passions renders the *subject* (in its foreseen modes and shapes), which makes the relations among actants possible. Here is what Greimas and Fontanille say in relation to this:

*It is therefore not surprising that the best-explored, and perhaps the most efficient, level of the generative trajectory is, in fact, situated in the middle area between its discursive and epistemological components. We are referring above all to the modeling of narratively and to its actantial organization. The concept of an actant, freed from its psychological frame and defined by its doing, is the sine qua non condition for developing a semiotics of actions.* (Algirdas Julien Greimas & Fontanille 1993, XII-XVIII)

As can be seen, the concept of the “actant” and its relations, established earlier in Greimas (A. J. Greimas, 1987), enables the mentioned movability (from one state to another), in Greimasian terms.

If the above-mentioned relations among the actants can result in processes of transformation (gradually through actualization and

tensivity) into passions, one can establish the semiotic square at the semionarrative level.

In the concrete work of art we are discussing, for instance, love between Romeo and Juliet would represent conjunction on one hand, and hatred and contradiction between families on the other. Once such relations have been established, one can ask the following questions: how much time is needed, so that such passionate love can reach its culmination in the Balcony Scene? Or respectively: how much time is needed so that the hatred between the families gradually develops and becomes passionate?

Through the concept of *tensivity*, the semiotics of passions aims at developing such emotions, feelings etc., thus naming them passions, so that gradually, using transformation as a procedure the actants' relations among relationships discussed, are shown. Such relations, it goes without saying, do not concern ( for instance, in terms of the characters of an artistic work) only the main content lines of the work, but they concern also the contextual circumstances, which in turn contribute to the content's development on one hand, and to the clear-cut semantic units resulting at the end, on the other.

In such a fashion, one should also regard the dramaturgic development of the story: such contradictory taxonomies, as we stated, gradually develop so as to reach their peak. The author's intention is above all to create the necessary conflict, which would finally lead to the solution, which, as it is generally known, is tragic. One could advance the following questions in such a context: was there something that the characters wanted to do, or otherwise, a way into which they wished to behave, so that the consequences wouldn't be tragic? Or: were any other consequences necessary for the final development of the story? In these terms of the movability or changeability through transformations (such as may be shown in the frames of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes), such a state of affairs (seen initially in a work of art), may become a state of feeling through its semantic notions. In conclusion therefore, *despair*, *love*, *hatred* as universal semantic units can be deduced.

It should be clear finally, that our aim is not to perform a detailed application of Greimasian models in this instance, as it would require other components to be included, but it is, as we have stated, to argue for the extension of the semiotic limits, and its establishment as an analytical discipline.

S. Prokofiev for instance transformed the Shakespearean play into a ballet. He added a musical score to it, and was able to *transform the Shakespearean text into musical signs*. The motivation processes and further encoding of signs were given a new connotation. A new subjectivity has been built on an objective ground. For the following reasons:

1) A play has a well-determined form, which develops through the previously-known stages.<sup>48</sup>

2) Such a work of art, as we have seen, has already been encoded through the story and discourse once built by Shakespeare.

3) A play or a drama is based on the actor's actions through movement and speech, (both verbal and non-verbal communication included), and,

4) If once encoded, the work gets encoded (and/ or subjectivized) once again, rendering this time the musical score as its basis.

All of this, yet for what reason? It was Prokofiev who wished that this work of art could be otherwise encoded and/or interpreted.<sup>49</sup> In conclusion, his *subjective* decision to write a musical score (belonging to the beginnings of the twentieth century), proved to have high aesthetic values by rendering the signification process readable to the audience in a brand new shape. Or, on another level: if the *acting subject and/or knowable subject*, the composer this time, is in a conjunctive relation with the playwright on one hand (in one of the axes), then, the musical score (which represents *seeming*, in the next axis), the performance of the work itself, would represent *reality*, on the other. It naturally should be understandable, that this would be only one of the possible ways to start the process of application. It is to state finally, that such semionarrative level(s) should be applied in a gradual way, thus moving from the state of affairs (within the initial epistemological and abstract level, or deep structure), to the state of feelings (within their manifestations in the concrete level, or surface structure). In conclusion, it should be clear that thus, one can finally contribute to the typological similarities and differences (in terms of various artistic expressions), by way of various semiotic analytic levels.

Continuing our explanation, it should be stated that one can reach the *unlimited process of semiosis*, as a result. To conclude: the field of various kinds of artistic expressions, overcomes the exactness and/or precision of the analytical procedures, creating thus *a brand new reality, or new world of possibilities*<sup>50</sup>, which if further encoded and decoded ( or: transformed within other semiotic methods), becomes *open* [ See: (Eco, 1962)] , and is a part of the interpretation process as such.

## Conclusion

Besides the mentioned exactness (and/or precision) of the semiotic process, (by which one intends an idealistically conceptualized

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<sup>48</sup>For instance, once established by Aristotle.

<sup>49</sup>Like I have hopefully explicated until now, we shall take these two terms in this stage of our presentation as two various and/or different analytical levels of analysis.

<sup>50</sup>See: (Eco, 1962)



hypothesis), based on its theory, one is able to go beyond it, thus to analyze, not only a work of art, but a social phenomenon as well. In such a sense, it's not difficult to conclude then, that semiotics as a discipline (and/or analytical method), is thus a part of social phenomena in general. Speaking semiotically, in its narrowest sense, the notion of the possibilities of such a method is deeply rooted in it. Thus, besides the mentioned analytic methods, as it is generally known, semiotics may treat its object out of the logical and pragmatic points of view.<sup>51</sup>

Noting such an issue's existence, one may ask if semiotics is applicable in processes which show an exact amount of transmitted material, which is motivated, so as to give a path to procedures which would clarify its signification as a result? Besides, how can such an issue expand to societal phenomena? Or better: how can semiotics overcome exactness (of its already established communicational processes)? Does it as a conclusion, have to treat the object or the subject? I hope that I have answered to some of the mentioned questions earlier in this paper.

Otherwise, as we have seen, in the field of arts, the relationship between one side and the other side of the communication channel may not be proportional (in the sense that unequivocal messages may exist) (Eco, 1968). The process of rendering the meaning (or the signification process as such) is based on its choice at the communication level (Innis, 1985). In such a context, and taking into account the other mentioned issues discussed in this paper, we should further ask: what is a world of possibilities (or a possible world)? (Eco, 1994c)

Depending on the approach, it is clear that there are more definitions in regard to this concept. Semiotics however in my view, should link (and/or equalize) this term to *the semiotic possibilities of interpretation*, because of its wide range of applicability in various fields (after all, it represents an interdisciplinary and/or trans-disciplinary scientific method, at least, in the context of our contribution). Consequently, there is a possibility to see it either through the *way, manner (or technique of writing) and reading the text* (Eco, 1994c), or through its philosophical backgrounds (Eco, 1997). The mentioned world of possibilities in turn, may be defined in the following way:

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<sup>51</sup>The question of the origin of semiotics in general, has been an object of analysis, among other issues, in the frames of my Ph.D. thesis (2008). It is to state here in turn, that their logical and psychological schools have given a notable contribution to its global development. The logical and pragmatic approach has proved to be older in this respect, and has contributed to the precision of its communication capabilities. Although such a matter shall not be treated here, it is to note that such important issues (such as the mentioned semiotic approach) enables semiotics treat both aspects, in the frames of its methodology: either objectivity or subjectivity.

*Definiamo come mondo possibile uno stato di cose espresso da un insieme di proposizioni dove per ogni proposizione  $o$   $p$  o  $\sim p$ . Come tale un mondo consiste di un insieme di individui forniti di proprietà. Siccome alcune di queste proprietà sono azioni, un mondo possibile può essere visto anche come un corso di eventi. (Eco 1994c, 128)*

Or in English:

*We can define a possible world as a state of issues expressed by a wholeness of prepositions, where for each preposition one for instance can count as  $o$ ,  $p$ ,  $o \sim$ ,  $p$ . As such, a world consists of a wholeness of individuals possessing propriety. Owing to the fact that some of these propositions are actions, a possible world, can also be seen as a continuation of events. [the translation is mine]*

As one can conclude, Eco's reference is clear: a word of possibilities is a step forwards towards generating meaning. As far as the cited text is concerned, (in terms of the techniques of writing: such as the time reference, the narration status, etc.), it is evident that Eco here is explicitly treating the beginning of the signification process.

It should however be noted here that the on-going processes for the sake of signifying items of the whole, and their decomposition into units aimed at semantic entities, have not been purposely treated in detail within their multiple possibilities (because of the fact that our paper's aim was to name some of the possibilities of semiotically conceptualized methods, as well as their application).

The same aim for instance can be achieved by other approaches, if one treats them comparatively. *Inferring meaning* as it is known was one of Pierce's challenges. His method was based on logical grounds and representational issues.

Whichever method is taken as a basis of a semiotic analysis, in our view, should be decently applied, with the aim of producing results. We can conclude by stating that either taken as a psychologically treatable method of semiotics (like we have seen in Saussure), or a logically treatable method (like one can see in Pierce), or epistemologically treatable semiotics (like one can see in Greimas and Fontanille), - including other methods and approaches not explicated here, such as *existential semiotics*, for instance (Tarasti, 2000) – semiotics today, has a remarkably extended domain. Such a conclusion to my mind renders it as a separate discipline (starting from its communication-based processes, through the psychological and philosophical ones). This indispensable fact renders the borderlines of semiotics much broader: within the worlds of its possibilities. Finally, the mentioned theories (and/or explicative and procedural methods), having also their inclusive features and components, gradually become complementary

to one-another, towards their manifestation, applicability and omnipresence of the empirical results of semiotics as a discipline.

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